

TRUTH
AND OTHER POEMS

PAUL CARUS

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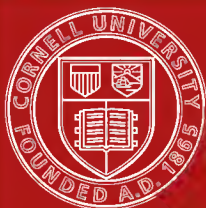


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Truth and Other Poems



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TRUTH

AND

OTHER POEMS

by

PAUL CARUS



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E.V. P.

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TRUTH

τί ἐστιν ἀλήθεια;

John xviii. 38.

Πάντων μέτρον ἄνθρωπος.

ἀλλ' ἀνθρώπου μέτρον τὸ Ἐν καὶ Πᾶν.

TRUTH.



TRULY, the measure of all things is Man;
But Man is measured by the One and All.

Man is a microcosm, and he grows
Unto the stature of full manhood, only
When to the One and All his soul responds.

There is a gauge that measures man, a norm
By which the truth that's in him must be tested.
'T is the Eternal in the change of time,
It is the Law within the macrocosm,
The Uniformity pervading things,
It is the One in this great All,—'t is God!

Mind you, 'tis Man, not men, that measures things;
Not I, not you, nor any other being;
Man only, Man alone.

“And what is Man?”

Man is the type of Mankind,—men's ideal.

“Are not ideals purely visionary,
Mere thought constructions of what ought to be
Mere fictions of an idle brain?”

Nay! Think not
That only things concrete are actual,
Nor that our aspirations are vagaries,
Fantastic dreams that lack all potency.

O, learn to prize ideals and their might
Which more efficient is than Nature's forces
And stronger far than footpound-energy.

Ideals are the factors of man's life,
Determinants that will impart direction.
They are not vain illusions, they are real,
E'en superreal. Yea, they are Man's guides;
And they, like guardian angels, help him find
The pre-determined goal of cosmic life.

Man, the ideal, is no transient thing:
He is the cosmic law assuming flesh,
The norm of being in a creature's garb,
An incarnation of the Deity,
Of that All-One which shapes and moulds the world,
Which manifests itself in motes and stars,
And thrills through all their uniformities.
'T is Man, not men, in whom the glory dwells
Of the great One in All,—The Man of Truth.

“Truth changes,” sayest thou, and thou art right,
E'en man himself is changing with his truth.

Both change! for nothing can remain at rest
In this corporeal world of flux. And yet
Things transient mirror the Etern which always
Keeps faith with its own law—faith with itself.

Truth changes as our knowledge broader grows,
As science gains in clearness and in depth;
But verily the new and broader Truth
Will never call the older Truth a lie,
For lo! it is the selfsame older Truth
As from a higher standpoint it appears,
And all the truths are ultimately one.

Truth is beheld by mind, and not by sense.
'Tis not a thing which merchants keep in store,
'Tis no commodity which we possess.
Truth is a power beyond the will of men.
From generation unto generation
Truth marches on, unfolding and revealing
The wondrous mysteries of cosmic life.

Truth is too great ever to find completion.
One goal attained entails still further tasks,
And so before our raptured vision stretches
The promised land of vistas infinite.

Truth is no child of human superstition;
It is no idol, nor an errant light,

'Tis not an ignis fatuus, no comet.
Truth is God's clearest, highest revelation.
In life Truth serves us as our guiding star,
And like the sailor's compass on high seas,
It draws us gently onward, step by step,
On its own path in well prescribed direction.

Truth is life's factor and determinant
And we are workers in Truth's noble cause.
We yearn for Truth, we need its light; and Truth
Enters our Soul; it takes abode in us,
And consecrates our lives to higher service.
Not we own Truth, 'tis Truth that owneth us.

Search for the Truth! Truth's problems are not vain.
Love thou the Truth! trust Truth, and live the Truth!
Walk on Truth's path and Truth will guide thee right.



TIME

ματαιότης ματαιότητων. Eccl. i. 2.

Der Augenblick ist ewig.

τὸ νῦν ὁ δι' αἰῶνος χρόνος.

TIME.



WISE philosopher with gloomy look
Sat in his easy chair before his desk;
And, thinking of the old King Solomon
Said, "All is vanity beneath the sun."
Then he took pen in hand, and thus he
wrote:

"'Tis Time which maketh all things vain:
The past is gone as if 't had never been;
The future, ever distant, never comes
But as the present; and the present, lo—
The moribund, the ever-dying present—
It disappears into the dread, dead past,
Never to rise again from out its tomb.
What difference then between the rotten bones
Of noble lion and of curséd cur,
Of king or hero, and a wretched beggar?
What difference then how life be spent? 'Tis Time
Which stamps its woeful seal of vanity
On all existence. Now we live and flourish;
We glory in our strength, yet are we doomed;
Alas! The morrow finds our place no more.
Oh, tyrant Time! Oh, King of Vanity!
Thy breath 't is makes the sweetest roses fade;
Thy breath acts like a bane; it proves the curse
That blights life's health and glory, and brings death."

There loomed a figure from the living present
Awful in majesty yet wondrous mild.
'T was Time himself in his unfading glory,
The ever young and yet the ever old,
Eternal Time, archangel of creation,
And smiling he looked down upon the sage.

Quoth he:

“Poor mortal, blinded by thy wisdom
Thou dost not know what Time Eternal means.
I harbor in my bosom all that was,
That is and ever will be: All the past
Is here, here in the ever-living present,
And all the future lies within my grasp.
I shape it; it will be my handiwork!
Whate'er I touch is actual, it partaketh
Of the eternal, of my own true being.
The thoughts of God I render real, change
Things possible to facts.”

Aloft rose Time,
And with divine compassion he looked down
Upon the ignorant of human kind,
Upon the frivolous, the multitudes
That do not think, and as a still, small voice
In deepest depths of their subconscious conscience,
He made appeal to them:

“Ye thoughtless, hear!
Hear, ye deluded mortals, and give heed!

For I declare to you a revelation
Which is the all-important truth of God:
" 'T is not indifferent whate'er ye do,
Evil or good. Whate'er ye do is done
For better or for worse. No power on earth,
No god in heaven can make a deed undone.
Whate'er ye do, forsooth, becomes established,
And thence 't will be immutable for aye.
Imbedded in the universal structure,
'T will be a building block of your own make
As an enduring part of cosmic life.
And mind the truth, 'Ye are your own creators.'
Whate'er ye do, ye are yourselves; and ye
Are called upon to make the best of life,
To change, each in his sphere, the world for better.
Yea, ye can do it! Therefore heed my word:
Whate'er ye do is not indifferent.
In all your doings ye do shape yourselves
As ye shall be for all eternity,
And thus ye shape eternity itself.
With God Almighty, as His own true children,
And His co-workers, ye participate
In moulding this great Universe of His."

Time paused awhile and let his searching eye
Glance o'er the motley crowd of human kind
Which throngs the world's kaleidoscopic show.

How all these puny creatures hate and love,
How wildly do they struggle; and they scramble
For worthless goods but leave the pearls of life
Unheeded by the wayside! Father Time,
Their guardian, endureth patiently
Their many follies, wickedness and crime.
He stands unmoved by errors and by failures,
And smiles at their uncounted vanities.
Divine forbearance hushes in his mind
The bitterness and the contempt he feels,
And now his speech rings with benevolence:

“Surely, I cherish all whoe’er they be
As types of the attempts at actualizing
The aspirations that ensoul their hearts.
I treasure every one of them, be they
Marked characters of greatness that would boldly
Not shrink from aught and dare to be themselves,
Or be they weaklings, commonplace and humble.
They all are welcome, I preserve them all,
Yea, even for the wretch I have a place
And hold him safe in my impartial hand.
But most I treasure those rare, noble souls
Who their own selves will freely sacrifice
To live for greater aims, for higher purpose.
I watch all creatures in their origin,
I see their growth, becoming, and decay;
I hold them all and I preserve their types.

All stay with me, all help me to work out
The future which they long for."

Thus Time spake
And pointing to the future, he addressed
The living generation of the present.
In fatherly and mellow voice, he said:

"A special message have I for each child
That enters life, a message which the youth
Should mind when he begins to be himself
And shape his destiny with clearer vision.

"O listen, youth, consider life's great boon!
I offer thee a chance to be thyself,
And to immortalize thy better being.
Rise to this glorious opportunity
And act as thou would'st fain have acted, when
After thy death thou couldst revise thy doings.
Abstain from deeds thou surely wouldst regret
When thy allotted time of life be spent—
From deeds which then thou wouldst have left undone.
Yet do accomplish with thy utmost vigor
What then in having done thou wouldst take pride.

"Dare be thyself, yet shun all selfishness,
Shun wrong, shun hatred, vanity and greed.
Give to thine inmost being real life.
Work out the aim that lurketh in thy soul,

Nor fear the joys of life nor shrink from pain.
Be as thou would'st endure eternalized,
For life is not indifferent nor vain,
And as thou actest so thou shalt remain.



LOVE

Ἄγαπητοί, ἀγαπῶμεν ἀλλήλους, ὅτι ἡ ἀγάπη ἐκ τοῦ θεοῦ ἐστίν, καὶ πᾶς ὁ ἀγαπῶν ἐκ τοῦ θεοῦ γεγέννηται καὶ γινώσκει τὸν θεόν. ὁ μὴ ἀγαπῶν οὐκ ἔγνω τὸν θεόν, ὅτι ὁ θεὸς ἀγάπη ἐστίν. 1 John iv. 7-8.

LOVE.



LOVE is the witch that lures us into life
And holds us here, thralls of her magic
spell.

Happy is he who, drunk with her sweet
wine,

Raves in a paradise of self-deception,

A paradise built up by his own thought;
But wretched he who, being disillusioned,
No longer trusts the guidance of her wand.

The primal stuff of ether is too neutral,
Too nondescript for Love to play her game.
She slumbers in its vast, unmeasured ocean
Till matter forms within its secret depths;
Then she awakes and straightway is at work.

When in concrete formation worlds take shape,
When narrow egotism cramps itself
Into the shapes of separate existence,
Setting themselves in ownhood definite
Against the rest, against all other being,
Then love stirs them to seek a higher goal.
It is as though primordial unity
Strove sturdily against the isolation
Of a particular disjointed life.

Prompted by Love, creation's beauteous queen,
The yearning for return to harmony
Asserts itself throughout concrete existence
In longings still obscure but strong and wild.
Love holds all things material in her leash—
Not one of them can break away; they all
Remain but parts of the encircling whole.

Love makes the atoms, those self-centered specks
Of being, yearn with all their gravity
For other atoms. In their search they whirl
With myriads of their kind in graceful spirals,
And when their passion flashes up in heat
Their radiance trembles through the space as light.

Love is an artist, and she takes delight
In moulding what is bodily. Her creatures,
Countless in number, varied in design,
Swarm out of her deft hands in bright array.
She breathes her breath into the dull commotion
And lo! our world like water-bubbles rises
In garish, dazzling beauty! But how hollow
Is their revolving shape! And on their films
Material motes crowding round emptiness,
Self-seeking puny egos, find a place.

Such is Love's work and here she finds her field.
Nor can we doubt that the same law determines

Varieties untold. The molecules
Are each by each attracted and combine
According to their forms in search for others.
And while they satisfy their needs they build
Newer creations full of richer chances.
Affinity—that is the law of Love,
And Love's the power that keeps the world in motion.
She moldeth life, and inexhaustible
Are her designs, her patterns, her devices.

Wherever life prevails there too lurks Love.
Raptures of happiness like hashish visions
Glow in the sentiments of every soul.

Watch here the butterfly! There comes another
Who just has caught a vision of his mate.
See how that fluttering phantom draws him on;
The iridescent colors on her wings,
Their gay designs, their graceful flapping motions
Possess the charms that will appeal to him.
Indeed, the quivering image finds response
In slumbering sentiments. Intoxicated
He follows her, while she, his mate, withdraws.
Now she alights; there on the flower she lingers,
As though expecting him—a moment only.
For now, anon, she's on the wing and so
In playfully coquettish chase they move.
When he approaches, she will coyly flee
As though she stood in awe of things unknown.

And do we read aright the secret meaning
Which her erratic hoverings indicate?
His wooing wakens in her virgin mind
Sweet half-remembered dreams, inherited
From ages past, and yet she hesitates.
She seems to waver whether she may trust
The fairy vision, whether it is he
Whom she expects. Will he fulfil the longing
That stirs her little soul? Ought she to stay?
Ought she allow him to draw nigh to her?

And thou, Oh man, art of no other fabric—
Only more complicated, partly greater
And partly grosser. Yet there is but one
Of all thy preferences quite unique:
To thee that rarest faculty is given
To comprehend the world, to know thyself,
Eke, if thou choose, to search for truth and find it.
Not being shackled by the fleeting present,
Beholding past and future all in one,
The vision of eternity is thine.

Thou seest the rule that dominates all forms
And reachest out into the realm of norms.
What to all other creatures is concealed,
The cosmic lawdom, is to thee revealed.
As more and more the truth will make thee free,
Thou wilt be master of thy destiny.

And yet with all thy pride, wisdom and art,
'Tis Love that fills and dominates thy heart.
Be comforted, perhaps 'tis for thy best
Thou art as much Love's toy as all the rest.



DE RERUM NATURA

I
THE PROBLEM

II
THE SOUL

III
THE ALL

Felix qui potuit rerum cognoscere causas.
—Virgil.

Translated from the German by Charles Alva Lane
in collaboration with the author

I. THE PROBLEM



WHEN thought, to comprehend the Universe,
Within me stirs, my soul is thrilled with awe.
With reverence only dare I lift mine eye
To front the gathered worlds of that All-One
Wherein the cosmic order rules supreme
Ensouling with its breath both sun and mote.

Since measureless eternities new worlds
Originate from wrecks of those destroyed—
A rhythmic palingenesis.

With awe

O Cosmos, contemplateth he thy ways,
Whose peering glass surveys the teeming heavens.
Before the mystery that in thee lives
Bewildered stands the gray philosopher.
For like the sea thou art, from whose abyss
Wave upon wave majestically swells
To sink again down into plumbless deeps.

Upon thy bank, Ocean of Worlds, behold
The poet musing stands! What longings stir
His dreamy heart! How, as in prayer, the soul
With full devotion glows exultantly!
Yet through his hallowed mood of worship jars
The discord of the doubter's questionings:

“And wilt thou venture the impossible,
“To celebrate in song the infinite?
“How darest thou to glorify the All
“On which for ages man’s enquiring mind
“Has spent its efforts—many not in vain—
“With probings after truth? The Sciences
“Are anthems grand whose cadences unfold
“Far richer music than thy harp can yield.
“Their notes seraphic are the noble souls
“That soar on wings of thought to untold heights.”

Yea, but emotion yearns for utterance
When I behold the never failing order
That brooks no chaos, proves the universe
A glorious cosmos well ordained by law,
And finds its image in the human soul.
What wondrous constancy in nature’s realm!
Its ordinance enthralleth every part
To service of a greater whole. It sways
The love and hate of atoms numberless;
By rule mechanical it buildeth worlds
And maketh loosely scattered star-dust change
To solar systems,—suns with wandering moons
The dispensation of this order leadeth
The budding race of cells to unity,
Allotting so the labor of the whole

That organisms deftly shape themselves.
What grandeur overwhelming, infinite!

“And this thou laudest?” rose the bitter voice
That fain would hush the poet’s cosmic psalm,
“Forget not then how Justice smiteth him
“Who, finding not his duty to the whole,
“In restive selfhood shirks. Yea, verily
“The guiltless with the guilty feel the smart.”

That know I well, for life hath shown to me
How much of misery the heart may hold.
Ay, every effort is with grief entwined
And anxious care. Without the battle’s brunt
No victory; and conflict yields but wounds.
We all pursue elusive luring goals
Which woo the weariness of toiling feet.
Onward and on we rush without a halt
Around a center dreamed of but unseen.
I know it well, yet have I also found
That pain’s tuition will ennoble life,
And our endeavor giveth toil its worth.
In equal measure Nature suffering doles
With pleasure’s sweetening apportionment;
And only he who lives is doomed to die.

And this is justice, therefore murmur not.
All preference in life is duly balanced

By corresponding risks. Throughout we are
Embraced with equity's unbending sternness
And with the favors of impartial love.
The burden must be sore that winneth worth,
Yet what thou sufferest in the press of strife,
Must thou for that humanity endure
Which liveth in thy heart, inspiring thee
To win the goal that shimmers to thy dream,
And goading thee to solve life's mysteries.
When I the nameless misery behold
That trembles through the individual soul,
Whose puny work in idle piecemeal lies,
I will look up and seek life's consolation
In cosmic Unity's eternal bliss.
Then hope, a-yearn within my bosom, saith:
"Lo, every dissonance must be attuned
"If thou the pulsing harmony wouldst hear
"That swelleth from the chorded galaxies."

Let not self's insufficiency mislead:
Thou art a part, so gladly serve the whole.
Take courage lest thine aspirations flag,
By weariness and tribulation galled.
And death, life's holy consummation, brings
The benison of eternity.
When in death's agony thy heart must break,
When day declines, and light in consciousness
Becomes extinct, fading away in gloom,

Do not, O Soul, despair! thou livest yet
Within the bosom of the All. The stream
That finds the sea meets not extinction there.
The vampire years soon drain the pulse of life;
But transient, too, are all our cares and griefs.
When silence darkens round the failing breath
The evils vanish that disquiet us,
And death, life's holy consummation, brings
The benison of eternity.



II. THE SOUL



HERE am I, imaged in the glass of thought,
And eager in desire to dare and do.
Life, warm and pulsing, tingles in my veins,
And restlessly thought's lightning flashes dart.
Pause thee, O Soul, and think upon thyself!
What art thou, then? Unveil thy mystery.

Whence comest thou? and what may be the purpose
That giveth to thy strivings consecration?
Declare thy nature to thyself, O Soul,
And read thy features in awareness traced.

Kaleidoscopic splendors haunt mine eye,
Picturing ambient Nature's shifting shapes,
And through mine ear pierce tonal messages.
Each sense its typical investment weaves,
Which, wrapt in memory's stability,
Shall rise anon out of the buried past.
From interfused sensations manifold,
The staple forms of concepts crystallize,
To union drawn by psychic kindredship.
As thought joins thought, new thoughts are bred, wherein
The mind in glorious luminescence moves.
The restlessness which here for action yearns,
Gains aim and purpose; and the vague commotions

Of instincts and of passions wild are stilled
In calm tranquillity of self-control.

What wildering manifoldness! yet how all
In multifarious unity entwined,
Creates the wondrous fabric of the soul!
And this I call my Self. What visions rare!
What cadencing of tones! what odor-sensing!
And all, yea all, hath meaning: what befalls
Denoteth streams and forests and the stars,
Our dearest hopes, love's lurement, and dread fears,
Denoteth joys and racking pains, denoteth
Wrath, struggle, brothers, enemies; and all
This pageantry of varied forms are symbols
Revealing to the Self its own Beyond.

Beyond, I hear the clangor of the world;
But only in myself the voices range.
Beyond, a glimmering panorama lures;
But in mine eye the compassed picture lies.
Thus by a thousand subtle threads am I
Close intertwined with that surrounding world
Wherein I move. I contemplate the Vision:
Of me it is a part. I am the All;
Albeit that which into Self hath grown
Is of the world a part: This bides, I pass.
But lo! e'en then, in that which lies outside
Of mine own self, I evermore endure.

Erewhile I came to birth : the gathered lore
Of tome and sense and life's wide school I sought.
Ere ever life I knew, where was I then?
Am I from nothing come, to lapse again
Into nonentity? Nay, into form
Have I been fashioned, and the mould I know
Wherein the features of my Self were wrought.
Not from the blank Inane emerged the soul :
A sacred treasury it is of dreams
And deeds that built the present from the past,
Adding thereto its own experiences.
Ancestral lives are seeing in mine eyes,
Their hearing listeneth within mine ears,
And in my hand their strength is plied again.
Speech came, a rich consignment from the past,
Each word aglow with wondrous spirit life,
Thus building up my soul of myriad souls.

I call that something "I" which seems my soul ;
Yet more the spirit is than ego holds.
For lo! this ego, where shall it be sought?
I'm wont to say "I see"; yet 'tis the eye
That sees, and seeing, kindleth in the thought
The beaming images of memory.
"I hear" we say: Hearing is of the ear;
And where the caught word stirs, there chords resound
Of slumbering sentiment; and echoes wake
Of tones that long ago to silence lapsed.

Not dead, perfected only, is the past;
And ever from the darkness of the grave
It rises to rejuvenated life.
The "I" is but a name to clothe withal
The clustered mass that now my being forms.
Take not the symbol for reality,
The transient for the Eterne. Mine ego, lo!
'Tis but my spirit's scintillating play,
This fluctuant moment of eternities
That now are crossing where my heart-blood beats.
I was not, am, and soon shall pass. But never
My soul can cease; the breeding ages aye
Shall know its life. All that the past bequeathed,
And all that life hath added unto me,
This shall endure in immortality.

And if the welling spring of spirit-life
I seek where but in Nature is it found—
In that great All whose tiny part I am?
Yea, holy Nature stampeth into me
Its own, its wondrous varied forms;
Thus after its own likeness fashioning me.

Something there is eternal in the world
Of change, moveless in all the moving tides.
Wouldst call it God or Law? Wouldst call it Logos,
Which from beginning was? Name as thou wilt:

In ceaseless flux it evermore remains
True to itself in stern necessity.
When I reduce to order the entangled
Chaotic mass of my experiences
Reflected from the facets of the sense,
I seek what changeth not, the calm Eterne,
And trace my bearings in the restless world.
The still small Voice in reason echoeth,
And like a compass in our voyagings
Directeth through the oceans unexplored.

O, thou all-comprehensive infinite!
Thou One and All! Thou norm of all that is!
In no ambiguous language speakest thou,
In no uncertain promptings teachest duty.
Thy governance doth in the atom live,
And in the circling courses of the stars.
Fountain of Order; fountain, too, of Life!
To thee all sentient things their being owe,
'Tis thy warm breath which quickeneth our pulse.
Here potent aspirations upward yearn,
As spurning nature's lowly elements.
Thou formest in the soul an empire new
Where thou thy dispensation dost portray.
Thou givest light, and following its gleam,
We grope for paths of truth. Thou art the judge,
Thou art the only standard of the right;
From thee all motion of becoming starts;

In thee its motive and its purpose lie.
What from thee springs not alien is to thee;
And life in thee findeth its only aim.
Thy breath it is which warmly through us thrills;
It is thy light that gloweth in the soul.
Into undreamed-of fathoms of thy depth,
O great Creator-power!—unto thy heart
Shall man return. Restless in life, in thee
He finds the holy, termless rest again.

Yea, in this rest which still remains to us
As life's last aim and refuge evermore—
In this great glory of release from self,
This blissful apotheosis of life,
In this which never was not, and shall be
The ever present superreal of being,
The immutable amid the changeful All,—
In this my soul its bidding-place shall find.
Here all my deeds, my pains, my surging hopes
With confidence shall shaded be; and here
The holy spell of an unfathomed peace
Which haunts presagefully the yearning world,
Shall strength amid my toilings bring to me;
To charity shall rouse, and brother-love;
Shall prompt to benedictions on my foes;
In fortune it shall cheer, in sorrow soothe;
Shall yield the key to all the many riddles
Which compass me about; shall show the light

Wherein life's tragedies transfigured glow;
Shall lend to thought such vast interpretations
That Nature's dissonances will accord;
That love with hatred will be harmonized,
And rapturous fruition compensate
For all the pains our aspirations bring.
This source of spirit-life, in death's despite,
Holds heritage of immortality.



III. THE ALL



NOT dead is matter, though inert it seem.
A hidden life ensouls the eternal mass,
Which ever into quickened forms evolves.
Think not that spirit-germs have come to us
From alien realms of transcendental being:
In matter immanent, their nascent life,
From ancient darkness struggling, seeks the day.
Divinely noble thought, the crowning flower
That on the World-tree grows, concealed hath lain
Within the quickening virtues of its root.
An upward impulse animates the All,
And nothing is that aspiration lacks.

O, who can gauge the torture of the longing
That calleth ever out of gravity
For tactual companionship's caress?
Who knows how congregated atoms thrill
With love's delight, e'en where our feeble eye
But dust in stark inertness contemplates?

Thus slowly through the fathomless expanse
Drift ancient fragments of disrupted worlds;
When lo! from out the neighboring fields of space,

The silver wooings of our sun are flashed.
The errant masses wax in their desires;
And fleeter, ever fleeter, sunward speeding,
They kindle into mystic comet flames
Whose sheen our far-off firmament reflects.
Dismayed are all the superstitious tribe
Of frightened folk. Of war and pestilence
False prophets prate, of famine and distress,
And eke of fronting hour of final doom.
Only with gladness thrills the tipler's heart
In fancied foretaste of the comet's touch
Upon the favored season's vintage cast.
But from the world's commotion all aloof,
The astronomer, with raptured vision, stands
And marks the midnight's fiery wanderer.
The spectrum catches tokens from his light
Of elemental kindredship with earth,
And fancy hints of ancient dwellers there.

With eager glass the astronomer attends
The traveller's sun-surrounding course, and maps
His outward path to distant voids again.
With flagging pace and breath that wanes of fire,
The lonely wanderer wends. But in his heart
A dream of resurrection sleeps. What time
He yearneth for a larger life, whereto

His single power cannot attain, behold
From distant scopes, where universes teem,
An errant comrade, as by chance appears.
By gravitation's mutual greetings lured,
Both quit their courses, and, with gathering speed,
Impetuous to collision rush.

Space quaketh

Where in their passionate embrace they meet
And night is raptured with a flaming blaze.
Their doubled mass, with wider ordinance,
More night-embosomed comets summons forth.
Responding spaces yield their homeless broods
Which come with eager haste from every side
To join in tasks of a communal work.

Such is the birth of cosmic nebulas:
They are creation's crucibles, in which
From thinnest primal stuff the elements
Take shape in hordes of small atomic whirls,
A miracle of nature's workmanship,
Perfect in build and stable of construction
Fit to endure a whole eternity
From a world's dawn until the day of doom,
From its beginning to its dissolution.

The sheen of the new nebula which spreads
Through cosmic space proclaims the fiery birth

Of a new world with potencies renewed.
O Light, in beauty's holy guise begot
Through atom-motions, kissing in their play!
Art thou requited love's consummate child?
Or art thou of the progeny of war
Whose frantic passion, wrought to furious wrath,
Dissolveth all to fiery turbulence
Of gaseous hurricanes a-whirl? Perhaps
As toil-engendered boon we greet thee best;
For, after wanderings orderless and dark,
A common will inspires the meeting atoms;
Their immemorial desires at length
Create rich stores of power and life and light,
Burning the night from space.

There still prevails

A chaos wild of contravening storms:
The seething masses interpenetrant
Disport themselves in Bacchic revelry.
Wider and wider in their mazy gyres
The glowing circles spin, until at last
Their currents fuse in one vast vortex-whirl
To mould anon a pageantry of worlds.
Amid the chaos infant Order breathes.
In their swift circles see the planets sweep
As shapely spheres about the central sun,
Whose sovereignty as vassals they obey.

But where the cooling surface darkens round,
Impending vapors loose their liquid stores;
Seas surge with thunderous tides against the rocks
And over all an airy heaven hangs.

Although the atoms are complete, remaining
The same in their immutability,
They yet for closer union ever strive.
They build up higher complexes, but when
The active oxygen with burning greed
Seizes upon the grosser elements
Feeding the flame of life in constant rounds
Of nourishment and waste, then in this change,
The structure stays while matter passes on,
And preservation of the living form
Means memory, the builder of the soul.

Life-plasm builds up cells varied in kind.
The tender germs unfold their gathering life
And teem in myriad hordes after their kind.
The promptings of life's many needs create
Various responses with divided labor.
'Tis by cooperative work alone
That functions slowly into organs grow,
Developing the life of organisms
With nobler rule upon a higher plane.
The hyperphysical is bursting forth

From night's sensationless rigidity,
Precursor of a spiritual day
Of consciousness and purpose-guided will.

The multiplying tribes of living forms
In struggle for existence ever toil,
Till all the world a plain of battle grows,
Creature to creature dealing doom of death,
For hunger's or for passion's goading sake.
But keener waxes and of larger use
The sway of whetted powers that ply the strife;
And ever the appropriated gain,
In stern heredity's bequeathment held,
From generation unto generation,
Following fast, is yielded to the years;
And though for rest a-yearn, the failing lives
Of ancient ages lapsed to death's dark realm,
Their aspirations and their toils endure:
The soul of all their work lives yet, their lives
Into our own projected hitherward.

The soul's day breaketh. Consciousness appears
With clearing light, and Reason learns at last
Her powers to marshal and her realms to rule.
In pleasing modulations language rings,
Like speech of gods, to ears initiate.
Here poets find their rhythmic ravishment;
Here, too, desire for knowledge all athirst

In never-sating draughts her fever feeds;
And, borrowing illumination here,
The spirit fathometh abysmal depths,
Where, wrapt in mystic silences and glooms,
The slumbering secrets of creation lie.
Cognition's searching sunbeams spread and glow,
Transfiguring the unfolding universe.
They bring to ignorance, whose feeble eyes
By superstition's louring clouds are dimmed,
A lore assuasive of celestial truth;
And unto error's night, that like a prison
Encompasseth the aspiring soul of man,
They bear the promise of deliverance
From false illusion's lures and mockeries.

O holy sun, in all the circling host
Of bleak and darkened worlds, with touch benign
Light, warmth, and thrilling life awakening,
Thyself thou givest willingly for others
In sacrifice, and pourest forth thy gifts
Unstintedly to all the needful worlds;
Nor reckest thou if thanks thy largess greet,
If ingrate fools reject thine offering,
Or evil-doers warp its sacred use.
For others dost thou live, for others die.
So he that would the world illumine giveth
Himself, his heart-blood freely yielding up.

The thorny crown resignedly he wears,
The martyr's scourging suffers and the taunts,
And on the cross finds ignominious death.
For this the glorious radiance of the sun
Longeth again to find the ancient night.
For all the world he offered up himself
And in surcease of labor findeth peace.
As wintry years around the cooling sun
Fold darkening, life faileth on the planets.
An arctic desolation everywhere
To heedless heavens appeals despairingly.
The wedging frosts dispart the shapely spheres,
And drifting fragments mark the erstwhile worlds.
With widening distances space presses in
The sundered masses to estrange, until
Again they range the voids as comet-forms.

But as the morning ever wakes the eyes
Whose weariness the evening sealed with sleep;
As new-born spring the doom of winter thwarts,
And genial resurgence foils the tomb
With life rejuvenized in serial birth;
As night and day, in alternating layers,
From time unfold: so too the world respire.
The cosmic tides in rhythmic surges rise,
Ever to ebb in restless billows back

Where call the soundless Deeps; then upward heave
With gathered stress of nobler aspiration.
Thus ever from the grave is life redeemed,
And ruins wake to spheres regenerate,
Gemming the circle of eternity
With threaded universes evermore.



DEATH

ποῦ ἡ δίκη σου θάνατε;
ποῦ τὸ κέντρον σου ᾄδη;
LXX. Hosea xiii. 14.

DEATH.



DEATH, in thee we reach life's consum-
mation;
In thee we shall find peace; in thee our
woes,
Anxieties and struggles will be past.
Thou art our best, our truest friend!
Thou holdest the anodyne that cureth every ill.

Thou lookest stern, oh Death; the living fear thee;
Thy grim, cold countenance inspireth awe,
And creatures shrink from thee as their worst foe.
They know thee not, for they believe that thou
Takest delight in agony and horror,
Disease and pain. The host of all these ills
Precedes thee often, but thou brook'st them not.
'T is life that is replete with suffering,
Not thou, O refuge of the unfortunate,
For thou com'st as surcease of pain; thou grantest
Release from torture, and thy sweetest boon
Is peace eternal. So I call thee friend
And will proclaim thy gift as greatest blessing.
Death is the twin of birth: he blotteth out
The past but to provide for life's renewal.

All life on earth is one continuous flow
Which death and birth cut up in single lives
Of individual existences
So as to keep life ever new and fresh.

Oblivious of the day that moulded us,
We enter life with virgin expectations;
Traditions of parental past are we,
Handing the gain of our expanding souls
Down to succeeding ages which we build.
The lives of predecessors live in us
And we continue in the race to come.
Thus in the Eleusinean Mysteries
A burning torch was passed from hand to hand,
And every hand was needed in the chain
To keep the holy flame aglow—the symbol
Of spirit-life, of higher aspirations.

'Tis not desirable to eke out life
Into eternity, world without end.
Far better 'tis to live in fresh renewals,
Far better to remain within time's limits.
Our fate 't is to be born, to grow, to learn,
To tread life's stage; and when our time has come
There is no choice but to depart resigned.
Again and evermore again, life starteth
In each new birth a fresh new consciousness
With larger tasks, new quickened interests,

And with life's worn-out problems all renewed.
But we must work the work while it is day,
For thou, O Death, wilt hush life's turbulence
And then the night will come to stay our work.

When we have tasted of the zests of life,
Breathed in the bracing air of comprehension,
Enjoyed the pleasures of accomplishment,
When we have felt the glow of happiness,
The thrill of love, of friendship, of endeavor,
When we have borne the heat of day and sweated
Under the burden of our tasks, we shall,
Wearied of life's long drudgery, be glad
To sink into the arms of sleep, to rest
From all our labors, while our work lives on.
As at the end of day we greet the night,
So we shall tire of duties, pains and joys
And gladly quaff the draught of Lethe's cup.

Wilt thou be kind to me, O Death, then spare me
The time to do my duties, to complete
My lifework ere I die. Let me accomplish
The most important tasks that lie before me,
So when I die I have not lived in vain.
But has my purpose grown beyond myself,
I shall be satisfied and welcome thee.

Kinder thou art than thou appearest, Death!
Peace-bringer, healer of life's malady,
Thou lullest us into unconsciousness.
Thine eye, well do I know it, solves the transient
Into mere dust; but thou discriminatest,
Thou provest all, O just and unbribed judge,
Appli'st the touchstone of eternal worth
And so preservest the enduring gold.
Thou settest free the slave, soothest all anguish,
Grantest an amnesty for trespasses,
Abolishest responsibilities,
Ordainest the cessation of the ills
That harass life. Withal thou simply closest
A chapter in time's fascinating book,
There to remain as we have written it,
And so thou dost no harm. Happy is he
Who neither feareth nor inviteth thee.

I honor thee, great sanctifier Death,
Lord of the realm of no return—High Priest
Of the unchangeable, thou consecratest
Our souls when gathering them unto their fathers
In their eternal home; I honor thee,
Yet will not seek thee! I am here to live
And so will bide until the summons come
To enter on my Sabbath eve of life.
But neither shall I shrink from thee, for truly

I see no cause why I should face thee not.
Thou dost not doom me to annihilation,
Thou wipest out my trace of life as little
As any deed can ever be annulled.
Indeed, thou comest to immortalize,
To finish, to complete, to consummate,
To sanctify what I have been and done.
Therefore, I shall be ready at thy call
And deem the common destiny of all
Meet for myself, so when thou beckonest,
Friend Death, grant me thy sweet enduring rest.



